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Resistance to Temptation in Young Negro Children in Relation to Sex of the Subject, Sex of the Experimenter and Father Absence or Presence.

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One of the differences in child development caused by the mother-dominant, father-absent structure of disadvantaged Negro families might be the differential development of resistance to temptation in male and female children. It would be expected that girls would be more resistant than boys, that girls would show no difference whether their father was at home or not, and that father-present boys would be more resistant than father-absent boys. To test these hypotheses, 96 disadvantaged Negro 5-year-olds (evenly divided for sex, father presence, and sex of the experimenter) were taken individually to a room and left alone to play a bean bag game after an experimenter had explained the rules to them and how they could win a prize. Resistance to temptation, in terms of not cheating, was recorded by a hidden observer. The results failed to support the hypotheses. In one of the few significant findings, father-present children resisted temptation more with an opposite sex rule-giver. Also, there appeared to be a trend for father-absent children to resist temptation more with male rule-givers. This effect is explainable by the concept of deprivation of adult male social rewards. (MH)

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One of the differences which has been observed between the environmental conditions of the disadvantaged Negro and those of more advantaged groups has been family organization. Blood and Wolfe (1960) have indicated that a wife-mother dominant family structure is more often found among disadvantaged Negroes, while a husband-father dominant structure is more prevalent in advantaged groups. The mother dominant organization may well have a detrimental influence on the development of young males. Such influence is suggested by comparisons between

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the roles played by the adult male and female members of the mother dominant sub-culture. As Liebow (1966) observed, the Negro father often appears to be less stable in employment and to make less effort to maintain the family as a unit than the Negro mother.

Family structure and adequacy of available role models may be expected to have an impact on the development of the young disadvantaged Afro-American. One aspect of such an impact may be a differential development of resistance to temptation in male and female children. The present study was designed to investigate resistance to temptation in a game-like situation in disadvantaged five-year-old Negro children. On the basis of the above observations, disadvantaged Negro girls were expected to manifest greater resistance to temptation than disadvantaged Negro boys. Little, if any, difference in performance was anticipated between girls from father absent homes and those from homes in which the father was present. Not only were boys expected to manifest less resistance to temptation than girls, but father absence was expected to have a detrimental impact on their resistance so that father absent boys resisted temptation least of all subjects.

The pattern of response anticipated was, therefore, somewhat different from that found in a similar study by Burton, Allinsmith and Maccoby (1966) in which the four-year-old children were from middle- and upper-middle class Caucasian families. They (Burton, et al., 1966) found that girls resisted temptation more when rules were set by male adults while boys resisted temptation more with a female adult. They did not find an overall difference in performance between girls and boys. To test the predictions about the behavior of children from disadvantaged Negro father absent and father present homes, a game-like situation similar to that

employed by Burton, et al. (1966) was used.

Method

Subject

Forty-eight male and 48 female five-year-old Negro children were selected from Nashville public school kindergartens serving a population similar to that served by Head Start programs. One-half the children of each sex came from homes in which the father or a father surrogate had been absent for at least a year. Definition of father surrogate included maternal uncles, grandfathers, or close friends of the mother. Only those children whose father or stepfather had been present in the home during the preceding year were included in the sample of Ss from father present homes.

Apparatus

Two short questionnaires were used to get information about family membership from each child and from an adult member of his family.

The bean bag game consisted of a rectangular wooden box with a 2 x 12 inch black tape marker placed five feet in front of it. On the 12 x 48 x 5 inch front panel of the box, five lights were centered, recessed one inch, and covered by a 4 x 36 x 1/4 inch plexiglass panel. Side panels of the box were 12 x 28 x 1/4 inches while the back panel was 25 x 48 x 1/4 inches. A string was stretched loosely from one side to another midway between the front and back panel. The string was not visible to a five-year-old standing on or near the black marker placed five feet in front of the Bean Bag Game box. The onset of the chime and each light were wired to occur simultaneously. The lights remained lit until E "reset" the game with a mock switch taped to the wall above the reach of the S and apparently also wired into the game. Lights and chimes were in fact

controlled at all times by the observer hidden in a portable observation booth.

Resistance to Temptation Measure

The resistance measure was a seven point scale based on the count of the number of bags the subject threw correctly before deviating from the rule. If the subject deviated immediately he received a score of one. The score was two if he threw one bag correctly and then deviated. If he threw all bags correctly and then cheated, he had a score of six. If he never cheated during the test period the score was seven. Burton, et al. (1966) reported a very high reliability of this procedure.

Procedure

An equal number of males and females from each father absent and present condition were randomly assigned to either a male or female Negro experimenter. Each of the six Es tested an equal number of children in each of the treatment groups. The procedure followed was similar to that described by Burton, et al. (1966). The experimenter to which the child had been assigned brought him individually from the classroom to the experimental room. The experimenter talked with S while walking to the experimental room and tried to be warm and friendly during this time. A standardized script was followed in showing the subject how the game "worked" and in teaching him the rules of standing on the marker while throwing each of the five bean bags only once and one at a time over the front panel of the game. All Ss received the same schedule of "three hits" out of the possible five during the two practice games. After the S clearly demonstrated an understanding of the rules, E told S, "Now we will play the bean bag game again. I want you to try very hard to do as well as you can because you are going to try to win a prize."

A tray of toys ranging in value from 5 to 15 cents was uncovered and S was told that he could win the toy of his choice if he "got enough lights on." The S was then asked which one he would choose if he should get enough lights on to win the prize. This was done to insure that all children focused on a toy they actually liked. This was an attempt at maximizing temptation in order to control for differential arousal to deviate from the rules. E reviewed the rules for S. Just as S was about to play the next game, E looked at his watch and said, "I have to go out and make a telephone call, but you go ahead and play the game according to the rules while I am gone." To mitigate S's fear of being caught, E took the S to the door and showed him how he was to lock the door so that no one could bother him while he was playing the game. E explained that he would knock on the door when he returned. After the second throw, only one light was given to the S during the 3 minute test period if he followed the rules. Additional lights were given for each breaking of the rules such as stepping forward, moving the foot marker, retrieving bags that had already been thrown and rethrowing them, and hitting the string with the hands. During this test period, the hidden observer recorded the subject's behavior and controlled the lights. After the three minutes, E knocked on the door and came into the room. E said to S, "Let's play the game again and this time will be for the prize." E ignore the lights obtained during the test period. If the subject indicated for E to consider that score for the prize or for some sign of approval, E said "You certainly know how to play the game. Now this time will be for the prize." This last game was played to have a check on whether the subject really understood and would follow the rules with E present,

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to eliminate any guilt feelings or feelings of failure which might have resulted from the subject's behavior during the test period, and to avoid reinforcing any cheating.

Results

A 2(father absence-presence) X 2(sex of S) X 2(sex of E) analysis of variance was completed on Ss resistance to temptation scores. While no F ratio reached the .05 level of significance a trend toward significance occurred in the three-way interaction which reached the .09 (F1, 88 2.96) level.

Because of the trends which appeared in the overall analysis, analyses of variance were carried out on the father absent and father present data separately. Table 1 presents the 2(sex of S) X 2(sex of E) analysis of variance completed on resistance to temptation scores of father present Ss. While neither of the main effects was statistically significant, the interaction was significant at the .02 level. The mean number of bags thrown before deviation from the rule for girls with a male E was 5.67; for girls with a female E, 4.25. The mean for boys with a female E was 5.17, while that for boys with a male E was 3.83.

Table 2 presents the results of the 2(sex of S) X 2(sex of E) analysis of variance completed on resistance to temptation scores of father absent Ss only. Neither the main effects nor the interaction reached the .05 level of significance. For girls with a male E, the mean number thrown before deviation was 4.25 while the mean for girls with a female E was 3.42. The mean for boys with a male E was 5.33, while 4.17 was the mean for boys with a female E.

TABLE 1

Analysis of Variance of Number of Bags Correctly Thrown Before Deviation of Father Present Subjects

Source	df	SS	MS	F
Sex of S (A)	1	2.52	2.52	5.42*
Sex of E (B)	1	.02	.02	
A X B	1	22.68	22.69	
Error	44	184.25	4.19	

*p < .02

TABLE 2

Abalysis of Variance of Number of Bags Correctly Thrown Before Deviation of Father Absent Subjects

Source	df	SS	MS	F
Sex of S (A)	1	10.08	10.08	1.85
Sex of E (B)	1	12.00	12.00	
A X B	1	0.33	0.33	2.20
Error	44	239.50	5.44	

To check for individual experimenter effects, t-tests were run to make comparisons among the three male and the three female Es. No t reached the .05 level of significance.

Discussion

Little support was found for the hypotheses based on observations of differential family organization patterns among the disadvantaged Negro. The hypothesis that the five-year-old Negro girls would resist temptation more than their male counterparts was not supported by significant sex of S main effects in either the overall analysis or the separate analyses. Father absent males did not appear to resist temptation any less than father present males. To the contrary, father present males with a male rule giver tended to resist temptation less than all other males.

Analysis of the data of children from homes in which the father was present produced a pattern of results very similar to that found by Burton, et al. (1966). Inspection of the statistically significant sex of E by sex of S interaction suggested that father present females resisted temptation more with the male rule giver while father present males resisted more with a female E. The age, socioeconomic, and racial differences which appear to exist between Ss in this sample and the white middle- and upper-middle class Ss in the Burton, et al. (1966) sample seem to have made little difference in S's performance.

On the other hand, inspection of the data from Ss of families in which the father had been absent at least a year suggested that children from such homes may respond somewhat differently to the sex of the rule giver. Both father absent girls and boys

appeared to resist temptation more with the male rule giver. Along with the tendency for male rule givers to stimulate greater resistance to temptation there was a very unexpected trend for boys to resist temptation more than girls. Unfortunately, the interpretation of these results can only be very tentative since statistical significance was not reached by the analysis.

In interpreting their findings Burton, et al. (1966) pointed to the similar cross-sex effects obtained in studies of social reinforcement discussed by Stevenson (1965). They interpreted such findings along with their own in terms of a general desire to please. They speculated that desire to please the E in the resistance to temptation situation stimulated need to achieve and need to conform differentially in boys and girls. They reasoned that a boy's desire to please the mother figure aroused conformity needs. On the other hand, it was speculated that the desire to please father figures aroused conformity in girls while the desire to please mother figures aroused less conformity. They concluded that such a two factor model better accounted for their data.

The social reinforcement paradigm suggested by Stevenson (1965) may provide a somewhat different approach to interpreting the cross-sex effects found here and by Burton, et al. (1966). While explaining the rules to the child in the Bean Bag Game, the adult E undoubtedly dispensed a good deal of social reward which acted as a reinforcer of rule conformity. The cross-sex effects evidenced in the performance of father present Ss would then be expected on the basis of the findings reviewed by Stevenson (1965). If father absence results in the deprivation of social reward dispensed from a father figure, the trend identified in the performance of father absent Ss would be explained on the basis of a deprivation-satiation paradigm such as that suggested by Stevenson (1965).

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